



The Lab Notebook

Join Us for the 2015 Muckers' Ball



The Second Annual Muckers' Ball will be held Saturday, October 3rd, 2015. The event remembers the “Muckers,” Thomas Edison’s lab researchers, and offers guests a rare opportunity to visit the museum buildings after normal visiting hours. Attendees will be able to view the exhibit spaces and share a meal as the muckers might have done during their frequent, all-night research sessions.

Last year at the inaugural event a great time was had by all, with food from local restaurants and live music and dancing to period music. Well over 100 people turned out to share a beautiful evening at the Park under the Big Tent. This year’s event promises to be equally memorable – we expect a high turnout so we’ll be expanding our tent footprint to allow for better seating and dancing space. Dress is casual – period dress is encouraged! Prizes will be awarded for best costumes. **Look for more information and ticket purchasing on the Friends’ website (www.foedison.org).**



Remembering Those Muckers’ Late Nights...

Francis Jehl, a veteran of Menlo Park, recalled those midnight “lunch” breaks in his *Menlo Park Reminiscences*: “Our lunch always ended with a cigar, and I may mention here that although Edison was never fastidious in eating, he always relished a good cigar, and seemed to find in it consolation and solace.... It often happened that while we were enjoying the cigars after our midnight repast, one of the boys would start up a tune on the organ and we would all sing together, or one of the others would give a solo.”

Ludwig Böhm was the glass blower in the lamp works. Jehl wrote, “When Böhm was in good-humor he would play his zither and amuse us by singing pretty German songs. On many of these occasions the laboratory was the rendezvous of jolly and convivial visitors, mostly old friends and acquaintances of Mr. Edison. Some of the office employees would also drop in once in a while, and as everybody present was always welcome to partake of the midnight meal, we all enjoyed these gatherings.”



Ludwig Böhm.



Francis Jehl.



Friends of Thomas Edison NHP Holds Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP was held Thursday, April 16 at the Park. Newly elected officers are: Chair, Hap Bojsza, Vice-Chair, Arthur Gordon, Secretary, Nina Barszcz, and Treasurer, Jerry Guarino.

Several outgoing members of the Friends were honored for their significant contributions. John Columbus, Phillip Drill, Paul Gauer, Esq., Thomas Hoatson, Wade Knowles, and Ken Mandel all received special recognition. Several of these honorees were founding members of the Friends in 1984. Since that time the organization has raised well over a million dollars to support the Park, funding conservation and education efforts that would not have been possible through federal funding alone. The Friends adopted an amendment to their by-laws establishing an *Emeriti Advisory Council*, to which the

Chair appointed the outgoing members.

New Trustees elected to serve three-year terms include Megan Brill, Jerry Guarino, Jonathan Robbins and Judy Santi, all of West Orange.



Message from the Superintendent

We are already well into summer, which is ushered in each year by our Edison Day celebration on the first Saturday in June. This was year two of the combined Edison Day/Street Fair on Main Street in partnership with the Downtown Alliance and Town West of Orange. The weather and crowds did not disappoint. In fact, numerous staff, volunteers, and partners commented that the visitors and fair goers seemed as pleased as those we saw last year, local residents, many from the immediate neighborhood, who came to enjoy the day, visiting the labs, checking out the classic cars, strolling the street fair and listening to great entertainment while tasting different fare at the food court (check out the two pages of candid photos on pages 4 & 5).

Was the event a success? My answer would be a resounding YES! Not simply because the weather turned out great and an estimated 3,000 visitors came to the laboratory, or that we collaborated with numerous organizations and artists who set up activity stations (ACS, Speedwell, sound recording artists...) which educated and entertained our visitors, or that our partnership continues to strengthen and grow with the Downtown Alliance and Town of West Orange. These are all worthy reasons why I would say YES! But, hands down, I would say it is about the visitors!

The Edison Day/Street Fair is doing an amazing job of re-introducing the town and its residents to the "Edison Museum" as it is known. Some Edison Day visitors have not been to the site for years or at least since the fourth grade when they came on a class field trip. And Edison Day is bringing them in. Also, we are welcoming new visitors and new audiences from the community who we hope will make return visits and tell their friends and family what a special place the Park is and visit us throughout the year when we host other special programs or events.

These are exactly the visitors that we are hoping to reach through our *Find Your Park* campaign, a Park Service Centennial Goal of connecting with and creating the next generation of Park visitors, supporters, and advocates, and we are making great strides through the Edison Day/West Orange Street Fair event. I look forward to participating in the planning for next year's event in the Park Service's Centennial Year; we can achieve even greater success in engaging our neighbors!

I do hope to see you around the Park!

Sincerely,

Tom Ross

Thomas Edison National Historical Park was established to preserve and protect Thomas Alva Edison's West Orange Laboratory, home, and collections for the education and inspiration of people worldwide.

Thomas Edison National Historical Park
211 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052
Web site: www.nps.gov/edis
Email: edis_superintendent@nps.gov

Visitor Information
973-736-0550 x11
Fax: 973-243-7172

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Our newly installed Visitor Center sign.

Entrance Fee Increase Beginning July 4, 2015

Starting on July 4, 2015, Thomas Edison NHP will increase entrance fees for visitors in order to fund important maintenance and improvement projects within the park. Regular adult admission will increase from \$ 7.00 to \$10.00. Entrance fees are not charged to persons under 16 years of age or to holders of the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Senior, Access or Military Passes.

Type of Fee	Past fee	New fee
Entrance Fee	\$ 7.00	\$ 10.00
Park Annual Pass	\$ 30.00	\$ 40.00
Expanded Amenity Fee – Audio Tour	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00

This past January, the park offered open forums and public presentations called Your Fee Dollars at Work to get community feedback about the proposal for the fee increase. During the public comment period, the park received many supportive comments: "I vote for the increase, the visit and exhibits are well worth the fees," "These are not high fees, it costs \$10.00 up for a movie ticket."

"This modest increase in fees will allow us to continue to protect, preserve and share special places here at Thomas Edison NHP with current visitors and future generations," said Superintendent Thomas E. Ross. "After carefully considering the impact of a fee increase on visitors and community members, we came to the conclusion that this is the right course of action to improve facilities and services important to visitors." Entrance fees have supported a wide range of projects that improve the park and visitor experiences, including installation of LED lighting in exhibit cabinets, new automatic door openers to improve accessibility for visitors using wheelchairs or with mobility impairments and treatment of the historic machines in the precision machine shop to ensure long term preservation.

Edison Welcomes Summer Interns from Seton Hall Prep



This is the twentieth year of the Park's partnership with Seton Hall Preparatory School that brings a team of summer interns to work in all divisions of the Park. This year's group has just been announced. They are: Samad Cohen-Calloway, Robert Lynch, Joel Ramos, Onyemaechi Eguh, and Ikem Eguh. Welcome to them and all the rangers, interns, and volunteers who will be joining us for a busy summer. Our thanks to the Charles Edison Fund for supporting the program through the past two decades.

Invention Ambassadors Visit Laboratory

On Monday June 15, Thomas Edison NHP was proud to welcome the inaugural class of Invention Ambassadors, participants in a program sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Lemelson Foundation. These Ambassadors hail from academia and industry and hold collectively about 150 patents. They were selected for their professional accomplishments, their interest in invention, and their experience in speaking to audiences on innovation, science, and sustainability. Ambassadorships are 12 months long and each Ambassador will be an evangelist for invention in a variety of public forums.



Inaugural Class Ambassadors:

Karen Burg - Director, Institute for Biological Interfaces of Engineering; Vice President for Research & Professor of Chemical Engineering, Kansas State University

Rory Cooper - Distinguished Professor and FISA/PVA Endowed Chair, Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology, University of Pittsburgh

Sorin Grama - Co-Founder and CEO of Promethean Power Systems (USA and India)

Paul R. Sanberg - Founder and President of the National Academy of Inventors; Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation, University of South Florida

Steven Sasson - Inventor of Digital Camera

Paul Stamets - Founder of Fungi Perfecti and Host Defense Organic Mushrooms

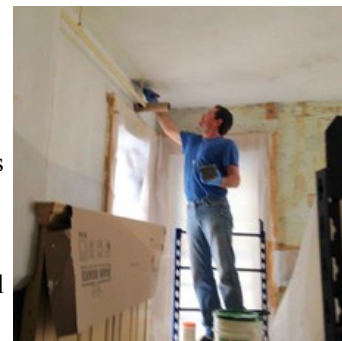
Vinod Veedu - Director of Strategic Initiatives at Oceanit



The group of five (Rory Cooper and Vinod Veedu were unable to attend) visited the Park throughout the day for tours of the laboratory and Glenmont. Later, in Building 1, the Ambassadors spoke of their own work, which encompasses discoveries and improvements in medicine, agriculture, nanotechnology, and even pest control. Steve Sasson, inventor of the digital camera, presented an extended talk. A reception followed. Our congratulations to these innovators and best wishes for their ongoing work.

Historic Workrooms Restored at Glenmont

The popular PBS series *Downton Abbey* has certainly piqued public interest in servant life during the Edison era, but Park staff has long harbored a strong interest in the behind-the-scenes operations of Thomas Edison's working estate. The 29-room Queen-Anne style mansion hosted a steady stream of relatives, friends, celebrities, dignitaries, and even other inventors throughout the second half of Edison's life, creating a flurry of activity that required a reliable team of servants. Housemaids, cooks, butlers, and gardeners kept the place running so the Edisons could focus on networking opportunities for Thomas Edison's business endeavors as well as for Mina Edison's philanthropic efforts. Today, rooms like the Laundry Room and the Butler's Pantry at Glenmont give park interpreters a chance to highlight these servants and the often arduous tasks they performed, tasks that technology has made much simpler for us today. The current restoration work in these utilitarian spaces at Glenmont also affords us an opportunity to reflect on the progress the park has made in its preservation efforts within the past few decades.



Fifteen years ago the room referred to historically as "the Laundry" was a Park staff office, complete with concert posters covering cracked and peeling walls and desktop computers scattered on a few old office desks. The curling 1960s linoleum was only the latest in a series of changes to the room in the decades after the Edison era. The room was closed to the public during tours, and visitors would often ask what secrets were hidden behind the door. Flash forward to today and the tattered flooring has been replaced with a reproduction cork interlocking floor tile, typical of the historic period. Reproductions and artifacts from the collection recall the historic scene in the Laundry, including the indoor laundry lines hoisted above the work spaces to dry clothes indoors during the winter. The Park's most recent project, made possible by visitor fees, brought a group of NPS restoration specialists from the Historic Architecture, Conservation, & Engineering Center (or HACE) who completed plaster work, repaired cracks and painted the room in order to painstakingly restore the damaged walls that were once hidden by those modern posters. Similar work has been accomplished in the Butler's Pantry, an area where ceramics, glassware, and utensils were washed and then stored in glass-front cabinets to be used for Edison parties and family meals. One can only

wonder what Mrs. Callaghan, a laundress who worked for the Edisons in 1899, would think of all of this progress—or what longtime Glenmont butler Henry Horsey would say if he saw the HACE staff restoring the ceiling in the Butler's Pantry. We can only hope they would approve of our work, or even better, think that nothing at all had changed.

Memories of Edison Day 2015



The Model A Club brought in a pair vehicles. Many visitors had their pictures snapped alongside these well-kept treasures.



The Park joined with the West Orange street fair and brought over two thousand visitors through our gates.



The Big Top on Vault 12 was the site of several kid-friendly activities: Junior Ranger, Edison Quiz, Glenmont parlor games like Parcheesi, even a Bigfoot table. Above, college Emily Storm helps some young artists.



Archivist Lenny DeGraaf welcomes visitors to Building 4 to view documents highlighting life at Glenmont: Mina's scrapbooks, correspondence, and even tradesmen's bills. Also: Thomas Edison's diary of his first courtship of Mina.



On stage, School of Rock—Chatham opened the musical proceedings.



Relax and revive.

Memories of Edison Day 2015



Hap Bojsza, Chair of the Friends of Thomas Edison NHP welcomed street fair visitors and offered promotional items to support the organization.



Volunteer Marcy Mochel staffed the Park's own table at the Main Street Gate, promoting the 2016 Centennial of the National Park Service and its Find Your Park outreach program. The board displays images of New York area Parks.



Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen attended Edison Day. Here he stops for a photo with Chief of Interpretation and Education Karen Sloat-Olsen.



Vintage cars of the 1950s and 1960s stretched along Main Street from Lakeside Avenue to Park Place, some of them parked (appropriately) In front of Wilman's Auto Body Shop.



Museum Technician Holly Marino (at the podium) and Park Ranger Greg Washburne (at right) presented a program on Edison's pervasive presence in popular culture.



Who Was Thomas Edison and How Does He Impact Your Life? was the theme of this year's Dream Rocket Project. Students' artistic responses were displayed on all three floors of the elevator tower. They'll be up until August 30.

Gordon Burns: A Veteran of the 1930 Edison Scholarship Contest

[Editor's note: In this article, Janet Ferguson recalls her father, Gordon K. Burns, who represented New Jersey in the 1930 Edison Scholarship Contest. Gordon placed third in the contest, graduated from MIT and enjoyed a long, successful career as an engineer with AT&T. He died in May 2005 at the age of 91. During a recent visit to the Park Janet and her husband John saw Gordon's original contest application and exam which revealed clues about his early background and interest in technical research.]



Gordon Burns greets Mr. Edison.

In the early 1920s, Thomas Edison constructed a barrage of unusual tests designed to identify the sorts of knowledge, raw intelligence, and character qualities which might produce an “inventor,” the concept itself invented by Mr. Edison. Almost a decade later, he used similar testing tools to identify young men who could most benefit from an excellent technical education to hone minds inclined towards invention. Thus was born the Edison Scholarship Contest, conducted in 1929 and again in 1930, in which each state and the District of Columbia selected an outstanding young man (unfortunately, young women were not considered) to participate in an intense and very unusual competition, the winner of which would earn a scholarship to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (considered by Mr. Edison to be the best in the country) or any other technical institution of the winner's choice.

Mr. Edison created an advisory committee which became the on-site judging committee, from among his closest friends and notables of the day: Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, George Eastman, Charles Lindbergh, William Lowe Bryan (President of Indiana University), his son Charles (President of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., and a future governor of New Jersey) and Dr. Hubert Howe, (a distinguished neuropsychologist of Columbia University and personal physician to Mr. Edison). Lewis Perry, headmaster of Phillips Exeter Academy, chaired the committee. The interviews, written exam, luncheon with the committee and Edison family, and local tours and meetings, took place over a five-day period centered on the West Orange laboratory.



Gordon Burns at the Scholarship Contest.

Gordon Burns represented New Jersey in the 1930 contest. At the time of his selection, he was a recent graduate of Columbia High School, in the neighboring town of Maplewood, having graduated at the age of 16 with what was reported to be the highest academic record in the school's history. Gordon's application to the contest, which survives in the

Edison Archives, details the equipment, experiments, and inventions in the science lab he constructed during his teenage years at home.

The competition was nationally publicized. There was great interest in the depth and breadth of the subjects tested, plus the character qualities discovered in the individual interviews with Dr. Howe.

Gordon placed third in the contest. Although he did not win a scholarship from Mr. Edison, an anonymous donor reputed to be George Eastman offered scholarships to Gordon, along with the 2nd, 4th, and 5th place finalists. Gordon used his scholarship to attend MIT, where he had already been provisionally accepted based on his high school record and previous testing results. Gordon also received an Edison radio with an engraved plaque commemorating its presentation by Thomas A. Edison to Gordon K. Burns.

At MIT, Gordon earned a BS and MS in Electrical Engineering, becoming something of a legend for his problem-solving skills, frequently not the fastest among classmates, but often the only one to eventually and correctly solve a difficult problem. When he returned to MIT thirty-five years later for a visit, one of his former professors recognized him by name.

After completing his MS degree, Gordon began a forty-year career with AT&T and its subsidiaries, known as the Bell System, during which he was named on four patents. Gordon spent the last fifteen years of his career at Bell Laboratories, AT&T's research and development subsidiary and, at its peak, one of the country's premier research facilities, involved with a wide range of revolutionary technologies.



Charles Edison, center, presenting souvenir medals to Gordon Burns, left, and Joseph Kingsbury in August 1940, a decade after their participation in the 1930 Scholarship Contest.

During this period he was a major player in the team that developed the first commercial modem. On his retirement his colleagues recognized him with a plaque dedicated to “Dr. Modem.” Gordon never stopped inventing. He filled his personal life with designs for improvement of domestic and recreational activities, one of which was patented. His last project, perhaps the most ambitious, was a multi-year effort seeking a more efficient means of inducing hydrogen fusion.

The Edison radio presented to Gordon has been an honored piece of Burns family décor for the past 85 years. Now the family plans to donate the radio to Thomas Edison National Historical Park as a symbol of Thomas Edison's support of scientific and technical education as a path for assuring a continuing stream of inventive minds, the momentum of which is now gaining impetus through the increasing emphasis on the STEM curricula of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Honors for Our Edison Family

Eastern National, the organization that operates museum shops at many NPS sites, recognized Joe Napurano, Shop manager at Thomas Edison NHP and Morristown NHP, for his innovative merchandising, product development, and outstanding level of support to the Park. Here, David Wagner, Joe's Eastern National supervisor, presents the award.

Congratulations, Joe!



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

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www.nps.gov/edis Click on
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Park Ranger Shemaine McKelvin, center, graduated in May from the National Park Service's GOAL (Generating Organizational Advancement and Leadership) Academy at a ceremony held at the Department of Interior Building in Washington, D.C. She was joined by Superintendent Tom Ross and Chief of Interpretation and Education Karen Sloat-Olsen.

Since 2013 the selective GOAL Academy has enrolled three 20-person classes. The program seeks to prepare the next generation of NPS leaders through comprehensive leadership management training. The Academy also seeks to enhance NPS leadership in an effort to become one of the top places to work in the federal government.

Designed as a 10-month program, the GOAL Academy is composed of five four-day training sessions. Each session focuses on different competencies including self-awareness, resilience, team-building, conflict management, executive leadership, and leveraging resources. Each team develops a group project that challenges participants to put their newly gained leadership skills into practice.

Congratulations, Shemaine!